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# Unconditional Communist Equality among Individuals: Beyond the Marxist Equality Limited to the Abolition of Classes

Christos D. Georgiou

*The article explores the perceptions of Marx on equality and its interpretation by the classics of Marxism, and highlights limitations in its egalitarian content. It then attempts to define an unconditional communist equality compatible with biological human nature and with the basic principles of Marxism. In doing so, it offers biological scientific arguments, based on the recent developments of biological sciences, to the critical question for the socialist ideology on whether we are the products of genes or culture, or something in between, in order to investigate whether an unconditional equality can exist. It also attempts to show that the limitations of Marxist equality to the abolition of classes are a main causative factor both of the past unsuccessful political implementation of socialism, and of the ideological fragmentation of the Left movement. By redefining in undisputed scientific terms and, thus, converging on a commonly accepted notion of equality, the article aims to contribute to the ideological rejuvenation, internationalist unification, consolidation and establishment of socialism.*

*Keywords: Equality; Marxism; Socialism; Biological Human Nature; Science*

Equality is a controversial concept in its social and political content, and has occupied important thinkers over time. Already in 5th century BC, the Greek sophist Antiphon (480–411 BC) claimed that social divisions result from human decisions, that is, social laws that violate the natural right to equality; all men are equal by nature, as is indicated by their physical construction and biological functions:

We are all by nature born the same in every way, both barbarians and Hellenes. ...  
We all breathe in the air through mouth and nostrils, and we all eat with hands.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> K. Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels, Fragmente Der Vorsokratiker*, 87, B. fragm. 44, p. 147, 5th (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956).

And the French encyclopaedist Voltaire also considered that,

All men are equal; it is not their birth, but virtue itself that makes the difference.<sup>2</sup>

The term ‘equality’ is open to different meanings and does not necessarily mean that people should be treated as equals in all respects. Equality can be normative (i.e. a goal-oriented imperative) or non-normative (i.e. viewed as a goal in itself). For example, equality is normative when it defines relationships and community solidarity in a group of people, and non-normative when morality is a necessary component of some law. Equality can also be determined conditionally and unconditionally. Bourgeois equality is defined as being conditional, and refers mainly to civil rights and their meritocratic evaluation based on existing unequal intrinsic (genetic) capacities among individuals. The content of bourgeois equality is partitioned into binding ethical and conditional rules, which result from the productive relations associated with a historically evolving market economy.<sup>3</sup>

Karl Marx’s equality sets normative preconditions and makes reference to human rights. Marx believed that people were born unequal in their skills and capacities,<sup>4</sup> and considered their capitalistic evaluation as an exploitative class inequality. He proposed the use of wage labour as equal standard for the fair evaluation of the productive skills of people, in the sense that they are equal workers<sup>5</sup> in a socialist (early communist) society lacking social classes and private property (socialist, classless equality). He predicted the final abolition of this standard and its replacement with the principle ‘according to the needs’ in an advanced communism, characterised by overabundance of goods (communist equality). The ambivalence with which Marx uses the terms ‘socialism’ and ‘communism’ shows that he sees them not as different stages but as a unified process of social transformations towards an advanced communist society. However, he distinguishes them in early (socialism) and advanced communism in reference to the different standards he uses for the content of their corresponding equality.

## 1. The Concept of Equality in the Marxist Framework

Marxist tradition in political and economic thought claims to eliminate all social inequalities associated with the capitalist market economy. Marx developed his ideas of equality after the Enlightenment and the emergence of bourgeois equality in its most significant form, that of the equality in opportunities,<sup>6,7</sup> with its central

<sup>2</sup> F.-M.A. Voltaire, *Eriphile*, play, act II, scene I, 1732.

<sup>3</sup> R.J. Arneson, ‘Egalitarianism’, edited by Edward N. Zalta, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2009, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/egalitarianism> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>4</sup> K. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Part I (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970; originally published 1875), pp. 13–30, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch01.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> C.D. Georgiou, ‘Analogies between Aristotle’s Ontology and Biological Ideologies on Human Nature’, *Nature Society & Thought* 17: (2004), pp. 47–65.

<sup>7</sup> The origins of the Enlightenment will find human liberties at their most degraded level, with a parallel rise of social struggles and anti-dynastic rural uprisings (especially in the second half of the 17th century in Britain and

idea originating from the emerging competitive market economy. Concurrent with this was the formulation by John Locke of the idea of natural human rights,<sup>8,9</sup> which is the basis of various contemporary bourgeois forms of equality with reference to rights.<sup>10</sup> However, Marx did not attempt to resolve the contradictions and limitations of the bourgeois equality of the Enlightenment, by proposing in its place a communist equality that is devoid of any subjective conditions that would challenge its scientific validity and inevitably create the divisions and variations we see thereafter in the socialist movements. Instead, he basically shaped a form of normative equality within a conditional historical and socioeconomic framework of individual rights. He did not solidify this framework with scientific criteria on the equality of human nature as well, possibly because of the limited advances of the biological sciences of his era, although he asserted that we 'must first deal with human nature in general, and then with human nature as modified in each historical epoch'.<sup>11</sup> Frolov presents an extensive analysis of Marx's view on man as a natural and human being.<sup>12</sup>

In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx argues that in the early phase of communist (socialist) society the economy will deliver the goods according to the principle:

The right of the producers is proportional to the labor they supply.<sup>13</sup>

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18th century in France and America). The French Enlightenment philosophers and encyclopaedists of the 18th century (Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, etc., and the American writer Thomas Paine) will cultivate the idea of the inborn equality among all people (around the famous triptych of liberty, equality, fraternity), in parallel with the development of the concept of inherent to every human being 'natural' rights and liberties of the Scottish and English Enlightenment philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries (John Locke, David Hume, etc.). However, after the Restoration in France (1833), human rights will be overshadowed by 'liberalism', the ideology of the then flourishing bourgeoisie. Thus, the ideological problem in reference to the inborn equality, which never prevailed in practice in these urban communities (e.g. existence of slavery in French colonies, constitutional inequality of black people in America, voting rights only to wealthy men in England), was solved by early 19th century with the introduction of the principle of 'equality of opportunities' (careers). The latter refers to equal access of all people to opportunities depending on their skills and talents. It is based on the premise that the economy delivers jobs with specific advantages, which should be open to all candidates that are selected on merit. The meritocratic principle, in other words, is that all competing runners stand at the same starting point and have an equal opportunity to finish first, based on their inherent abilities. Meritocracy is elevated to a leading moral ideal and comparative evaluation framework of the inherent capabilities of the individual producers to provide goods and services within a fluctuating free market economy.

<sup>8</sup> J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 289.

<sup>9</sup> According to Locke each person has equal basic moral, natural rights ('life, liberty, health, property') (ibid.). He considered that natural rights for each individual those that stem primarily from the sole fact that he exists, and has the right to continue to exist, and are independent of institutional arrangements and customary beliefs. Natural rights provide each individual with a set of claims over all other people, which they should absolutely respect. For Locke, private property is a natural right because every person has a right to the product of his labour (ibid.)—a position criticised by Marx in *Capital*. In this perspective, Locke's specific concept of property can be viewed as rejection of egalitarianism rather than a version of it.

<sup>10</sup> Arneson, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress, 1977), p. 571.

<sup>12</sup> I.T. Frolov, 'Genes or Culture? A Marxist Perspective on Humankind', *Biology and Philosophy* 1 (1986), pp. 89–107.

<sup>13</sup> Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, op. cit.

This norm can be regarded as defining an equal right for the individuals in relation to the distribution of goods, but, as every right, this too is problematic in its implementation. The main limitation of this conditional early communist equality is its premise (as with bourgeois equality) that people have innate abilities that make them differ. Thus, such innate differences result in different individual degrees of personal labour contribution in the production of social goods, which should be also distributed to individuals according to their abilities (to ‘the labor they supply’). Marx argues that this problem will be solved in the advanced communism, where society will function according to the supreme rule of full communist equality:

From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!<sup>14,15</sup>

With this vague definition of equality even for advanced communism, Marx attempts to equate a right among individuals (‘a right of inequality’ as defined by him in the following paragraph) to receive this amount of economic goods that corresponds to their degree of contribution to the economy (unequal because of their assumed genetically unequal abilities) and according to their personal needs (unequal as being dependent on their abilities). However, Marx would resist the description of this norm as an enforced principle of justice or moral or nature-based rights, by making an uncertain assumption, that his abilities vs goods vs needs distributive norm will be applied without any legal or informal coercion, or through a process of social enforcement, in the advanced communist society which will be producing goods in abundance, thus for everybody to enjoy equally.<sup>16</sup> As to the content Marx gives to equality in respect to justice for the early communist (socialist) phase of society, he considers that every equal justice leads to inequalities because it does not take into account the presumed inborn differences (in skills, talents, productivity, etc.) among people.<sup>17</sup>

To further unveil key aspects of the core of the communist equality as reflected in Marxist thought, they should be viewed under the prevailing influence of the capitalist morals of justice on the communist society in its early (socialist) phase described by Marx as follows:

What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This phrase was first coined by the French utopian socialist and journalist Louis Blanc (‘à chacun selon ses besoins, de chacun selon ses facultés’) in his article ‘L’Organisation du travail’ (‘The organization of work’) in the socialist newspaper *Revue du Progrès* in 1839.

<sup>15</sup> Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> G.A. Cohen, *History, Labour, and Freedom: Themes from Marx* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Marx sets here the measure of the economic evaluation of equality within the framework of a natural hereditary (genetic) right which he based on inherent inequalities in the abilities among individuals, as indicated by the following excerpt:

The right of the producers is proportional to the labor they supply; *the equality consists in the fact that measurement is made with an equal standard, labor*. But one man is superior to another physically, or mentally, and supplies more labor in the same time, or can labor for a longer time; and labor, to serve as a measure, must be defined by its duration or intensity, otherwise it ceases to be a standard of measurement. This equal right is an unequal right for unequal labor. It recognizes no class differences, because everyone is only a worker like everyone else; but it tacitly recognizes *unequal individual endowment, and thus productive capacity, as a natural privilege*. It is, therefore, a *right of inequality*, in its content, like every right. Right, by its very nature, can consist only in the application of an equal standard; but *unequal individuals* (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal) are measurable only by an equal standard insofar as they are brought under an equal point of view. (Italics added)<sup>19</sup>

Here we see the abolition of the worker class differences but their replacement with differences in worker ‘mental classes’ of abilities. Marx attaches much importance to the concept of ‘human nature’, which he subsequently complements by the notion of a ‘set of needs and instincts’, while in *Capital* he develops the thesis concerning interactions between man’s external nature and his internal nature, as a result of which both change.<sup>20</sup> Marx expressed similar views on inherited skills at a young age too. In the *1844 Manuscripts* he wrote:

Man is directly a natural being. As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand *endowed with natural powers, vital powers*—he is an active natural being. These forces exist in him *as tendencies and abilities—as instincts*. (Italics added)<sup>21</sup>

and human abilities for the man are for Marx

each of his relations to the world, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, willing, loving—in short, if he affirms and expresses *all organs of his individuality*. (Italics added)<sup>22</sup>

The aforementioned extracts reveal Marx’s belief that people also carry natural (i.e. inborn) powers (tendencies and abilities, instincts), which he characterises as unequal inheritance (endowment). Regarding the terms ‘trends’ and ‘instincts’, Marx obviously did not refer to the muscular or skeletal association of skills, which

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 173–174.

<sup>21</sup> K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy in General*, transl. Martin Mulligan (Moscow: Progress, 1959; originally published 1844), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/hegel.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>22</sup> E. Fromm, *Marx’s Concept of Man*, 4. The nature of man. 2. Man’s self-activity (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1961), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/fromm/works/1961/man/ch04.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015).

although of genetic origin have strong environmental development (e.g. by food, exercise), but to the spiritual/mental qualities, as concluded by his aforementioned phrase ‘one man is superior to another ... mentally’. Moreover, the recognition of ‘individual endowment’ by Marx ‘as a natural privilege’ of every individual does not depart very much from Locke’s notion about inherent natural human rights in individuals.<sup>23</sup>

As for the means of worker’s labour evaluation (i.e. in duration, quantity and quality), and the corresponding distribution of the social wealth among the members of the early communist society, Marx notes:

the individual producer receives back from society—after the deductions have been made—exactly what he gives to it. What he has given to it is *his individual quantum of labor*. For example, the social working day consists of the sum of the individual hours of work; *the individual labor time* of the individual producer is the part of the social working day contributed by him, his share in it. *He receives a certificate* from society that *he has furnished such-and-such an amount of labor* (after deducting his labor for the common funds); and with this certificate, he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as the same amount of labor cost. The same amount of labor which he has given to society in one form, he receives back in another. (Italics added)<sup>24</sup>

Marx’s equality was influenced by capitalism when defining it in terms of class abolition, but retaining inequality in the distribution of the goods corresponding to the abilities of the producer in early communism. In doing so he was also under the influence of the biological sciences of his era, especially of the theory of Darwinian evolution, which genetically distinguishes individuals (and races) as mentally superior or inferior.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, it was natural for Marx, the economist, to associate work performance and its wage value in proportion to the allegedly innate abilities/talents in every individual.<sup>26</sup> However, Marx was not fully clear himself on these matters when considering man’s nature:

[man] ... will develop his true nature only in society, and the power of his nature must be measured not by the power of the separate individual but by the power of society.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 289.

<sup>24</sup> Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> C. Darwin, *Descent of Man*, Chap. V, ‘On the Development of the Intellectual and Moral Faculties’ (D. Appleton and Co., 1871).

<sup>26</sup> Marx did not adopt the Darwinian competition among individuals as the driving force of society, as it is shown in a letter to Engels: ‘Darwin, whom I have looked up again, amuses me when he says he is applying the “Malthusian” theory also to plants and animals, as if with Mr. Malthus the whole point were not that he does not apply the theory to plants and animals but only to human beings—and with geometrical progression—as opposed to plants and animals. It is remarkable how Darwin rediscovers, among the beasts and plants, the society of England with its division of labour, competition, opening up of new markets, “inventions” and Malthusian “struggle for existence”’ [K. Marx, ‘Marx–Engels Correspondence: Marx to Engels in Manchester (1862)’, in *Marx–Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 41 (1860–1864, Letters), [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1862/letters/62\\_06\\_18.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1862/letters/62_06_18.htm) (accessed 24 September 2015)].

<sup>27</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4 (Moscow: Progress, 1976), p. 131.



Similar to Marx was Engels' perception on equality as he also defined it in absolute terms on the basis of worker class abolition, considering any other demand as 'absurdity':

the real content of the proletarian demand for equality is the demand for the abolition of classes. Any demand for equality which goes beyond that, of necessity passes into absurdity.<sup>28</sup>

However, Engels, as Marx, was more egalitarian when considering man as species and not as individual:

Man is the sole animal capable of working his way out of the merely animal state—his normal state is one appropriate to his consciousness, one that has to be created by himself.<sup>29</sup>

In the same Marxian notion of inequality in the abilities among individuals, Lenin based his position on the allocation of goods in socialism 'according to work'<sup>30</sup> and not according to needs. In line with the normative character of Marxian equality in reference to its unequal individual rights and their evaluation by an undefined equal 'amount' of social labour during the early communism (i.e. socialism), Lenin noted that,

*Every right* is an application of an equal measure to different people who in fact are not alike, *are not equal to one another*; that is why '*equal right*' is a violation of *equality and injustice*. Indeed, everyone, *having performed as much social labour as another*, receives an equal share of the social product ... But *people are not alike*: one is stronger, another is weaker; one is married, another is not; one has more children, another has less, and so on. [And, therefore, in] the first phase of communism ... *differences, and unjust differences, in wealth will remain*, but the exploitation of man by man will have become impossible, because it will be impossible to seize the means of production, the factories, machines, land, etc., and make them private property. (Italics added)<sup>31</sup>

Based on the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Lenin condensed Marx's model for the distribution of social goods in the following socialist principles,

He who does not work, neither shall he eat [and] *An equal amount of products for an equal amount of labour*. (Italics added)<sup>32</sup>

However, in contrast to his belief that '*people are not alike*', Lenin has observed that,

the transfer of biological concepts in general to the sphere of the social sciences is phrase-mongering. Whether the transfer is undertaken with 'good' intentions or with the purpose of bolstering up false social conclusions, the phrase-mongering none the less remains phrase-mongering.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Part I, Philosophy, Chap. 10, 'Morality and Law: Equality' (Leipzig, 1878); transl. Burns, E. from the 1894 Stuttgart 3rd edn.

<sup>29</sup> F. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature* (Moscow: Progress, 1971), p. 1975.

<sup>30</sup> V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, Chap. 5, Sect. 3 (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 14 (Moscow: Progress, 1968), p. 329.



Trotsky accepted Marx's and Lenin's abilities-based socialist distributive model for each worker ('in proportion to the quantity and quality of labor'), noting also that its development will require wage-based capitalistic tools:

In order to increase the productive forces, *it is necessary to resort to the customary norms of wage payment*—that is, to the distribution of life's goods in proportion to the quantity and *quality* of individual labor.

And he concluded (recognising indirectly as impractical the aforementioned position of Marx 'The right of the producers is proportional to the labor they supply') that,

In its first steps the workers' state cannot yet permit everyone to work '*according to his abilities*'—that is, as much as he can and wishes to—*nor can it reward everyone 'according to his needs', regardless of the work he does.* (Italics added)<sup>34</sup>

All these different versions of wage labour used as equal standard for measuring social contribution arose also from Marx's statement that,

skilled labour counts only as simple labor intensified, or rather, as multiplied simple labour, a given quantity of skilled being considered equal to a greater quantity of simple labour.<sup>35</sup>

Defending Marx in the *Anti-Dühring*, Engels denounced Dühring that in the particular Marxian view he supposedly discovered a dangerous socialist inequality in the time evaluation between simple and complex (specialised, intellectually superior, etc.) labour. Dühring had criticised Marx for, instead of arguing that the labour time for a simple and a complex work should be measured equally in a socialist society, on the contrary believing that the time of compound labour was worth more than the same time of simple work because it condenses (inside it) a greater average time of simple work. Interpreting Marx, Engels claimed that with this statement he was answering the question what 'determines the value of commodities', that is, about a 'simple fact, taking place daily before our eyes in present-day capitalist society'.<sup>36</sup> However, the distinction in time duration between simple and compound labour is also implied in Marx's aforementioned statement ('The right of the producers is *proportional to the labor they supply*'), by including

*and labor, to serve as a measure, must be defined by its duration or intensity, otherwise it ceases to be a standard of measurement.* (Italics added)<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, Chap. 3, 'Socialism and the State, Part 1. The Transitional Regime', transl. M. Eastman (1936), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1936/revbet/ch03.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>35</sup> Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, op. cit., Part II, 'Political Economy', Chap. 6, 'Simple and Compound Labour'.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, op. cit.

The same position can be seen also in the *Critique of Political Economy*:

*Variations in the duration of labour* are the only possible difference that can occur if the *quality of labour* is assumed to be given. (Italics added)<sup>38</sup>

## 2. Problems of Marxist Equality

There are some issues that Marx may not have considered in shaping his conception of equality and its implementation in the evolving early and advanced communist society. Similarly problematic are the positions of the classics of Marxism on the same topic. However, they could neither have been able to foresee all social changes coming from a constantly changing capitalism, nor were they aided by the sciences of their time. Therefore, they were unable to define on scientific grounds the content of the evolving communist equality, limiting it mainly within an economic productivity framework.

### 2.1. Work Compensation and Personal Abilities

A key problematic issue comes from the position of Marx that people should be paid compensatively and according to their unequal abilities and skills in the early communism. As shown in the preceding chapter, for Marx early communism defines equality in the distribution of social wealth, using wage labour as a standard of equal measurement of the individual's unequal social contribution (as deriving from inherent inequality in atomic capabilities). Apart from the problem of the division of labour in simple and compound, Marx defines his measure of equality with the 'tacit recognition' that the 'productive capacity' is an 'unequal individual endowment' which is a genetic 'natural privilege' of every individual.<sup>39</sup>

However, human nature is not defined by the biological make-up of humans because it is under the direct influence (their health too) of their typical behaviour, which is controlled by the productive relations prevailing in any society. As it has been extensively shown in many past and recent studies,<sup>40</sup> the sociobiological doctrine (and core ideology of modern capitalism) that supports the existence of innate differences among individuals (and races) in abilities (talents, etc.) has been rejected as unscientific by modern biology (molecular genetics and biochemistry). Moreover,

<sup>38</sup> K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Part I, The Commodity (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1859); transl. Salo W. Ryazanskaya, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/ch01.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>39</sup> Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> Georgiou, 'Analogies', op. cit.; C.D. Georgiou, 'Evolutionary Psychology: The Modern Version of Sociobiology' [in Greek], *Utopia*, 69 (2006), pp. 75–90; C.D. Georgiou, 'Biological Reductionism and Religious Vitalism in the Firing Squad: Dialectics, Biological Equality and the Left' [in Greek], *Utopia*, 92 (2010), pp. 67–98; R.C. Lewontin, *Biology as Ideology: The Doctrine of DNA* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992); R.S. Lewontin, S. Rose and L.J. Kamin, *Not in Our Genes: Biology, Ideology and Human Nature* (New York: Pantheon, 1984); M. Schiff and R.C. Lewontin, *Education and Class: The Irrelevance of IQ Genetic Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

the potential equivalence of the brain's mental dynamics in all biologically normal people has been confirmed by recent discoveries on its environmentally (socially-nutritionally) controlled equivalent genetic makeup and biochemical functionality.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the idea of genetically talented people ('whiz kids') has also been rejected by psychology even at the level of case-based studies.<sup>42</sup> More supportive evidence against the genetic basis of talents and abilities has come from new developments in biological sciences that will be presented in a subsequent chapter. Nonetheless, Marx did not believe that the social individual is determined only by her innate characteristics, as implied by the following excerpt from his critique of Proudhon: 'history is nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature'.<sup>43</sup>

The foregoing presentation of Marx's conception of equality (and of the protagonists of the first attempt of building socialism) also shows that it contains certain elements found in the bourgeois principle of meritocracy. That is, every person gets back from society what it deserves, an amount of work (recognised by socially certified vouchers used in the former USSR) measured in equivalent wage labour according to his/her talents and abilities. The bourgeois idea of 'equal exchange of exchange values' seems to mutate in Marxist equality into the form of 'equal exchange of labour equivalents' (among unequal individuals). The part of the Marxian principle of equality 'from each according to his ability' though a well-intentioned concept, may, when applied in future socialist societies, end up guided by the competitive incentive principle for fairer wages 'to each according to his inherent abilities'. This merit-based incentive is hardly differentiated from the bourgeois principle of meritocracy, and could gradually divert the social nature of people in future socialist societies towards a competitive individualism and eventually back to capitalism. This incentive could be one of the reasons why the ruling bureaucracy of the former socialist countries welcomed capitalist restoration without resistance. Thus, the adoption by communism of the idea of the existence of intrinsic intellectual or other forms of inequalities among people may render its disengagement from capitalism impossible, given, as previously stated, that capitalism's core ideology is precisely this idea.<sup>44</sup>

The ideological incorporation of the idea of intrinsic intellectualities into the communist vision, no matter how optimistically its vague and phenomenal egalitarian promises may be portrayed, could perpetuate social inequalities for the following main reasons. Individuals perceive social reality, experience and act on it by their skills as exercised within their social micro-environments (e.g. family), which shape

<sup>41</sup> Georgiou, 'Evolutionary Psychology', op. cit.; C.D. Georgiou, 'Are our Mental Faculties Biologically or Socio-politically Dependent?' [in Greek], *Diaplus*, 24 (2008), pp. 30–35; C.D. Georgiou, 'Biological Determinism, Individual and Egalitarian Societies' [in Greek], *Utopia*, 87 (2009), pp. 93–130.

<sup>42</sup> M.J.A. Howe, J.W. Davidson and J.A. Sloboda, 'Innate Talents: Reality or Myth?', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 21 (1998), pp. 399–442.

<sup>43</sup> K. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 'The Metaphysics of Political Economy. 3. Competition and Monopoly' (Moscow: Progress, 1847); transl. from French by the Institute of Marxism Leninism, 1955, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/poverty-philosophy/index.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>44</sup> Georgiou, 'Analogies', op. cit.

them on a daily basis (see extended analysis in the following section titled ‘For a new ideological concept of socialist equality’). Thus, people tend to idealise, magnify and exaggerate the importance of the social value of their skills, and, thus, create for themselves perceptions of intellectual supremacy over others. Moreover, a pre-cultivated perception of the genetic dependence of individual abilities can also lead to the misconception that skills are measurable (e.g. by the notorious intelligence quotient, IQ, test<sup>45</sup>). The inevitable disputes over superior capabilities among individuals (supported by, ideologically unacceptable for socialist equality, controversies on ‘nature versus nurture’) will exert social pressures for introducing quantitative assessments of individuals’ skills in order to ‘scientifically’ claim higher-level intellectual jobs, and recognition as belonging to an analogous distinctive status in the socialist societies. Additionally, such misconceptions, especially in people engaged in political activities (e.g. who have trained and indulged in rhetoric, in fluent writing abilities), can create in them analogous perceptions of intellectual supremacy towards acquisition of political hegemony, and consequent tendencies to create personal political mechanisms for supporting their gene-emanating intellectual superiority. An inevitable development of non-self-managed political power structures in past socialist societies may be the formation of supportive bureaucratic groups of people with elitist attitudes (e.g. similar to the communist party young pioneers). On another level, the perception of genetic intellectual inequality can stigmatise those people that appear seemingly inferior in the eyes of others, creating in them trends of social isolation and indifference, perceptions of fatalism and least mental effort for intellectual development, while in others it may develop vindictive and competitive trends for social climbing at the expense of others. Such trends could be continually strengthened, and may not disappear even under conditions of overabundance of goods (let alone shortage). They could put Marxist equality under constant doubt and may eventually lead to the collapse of the communist vision. Such problems would not have been unavoidable in the anarchist communist societies as well, because their prominent thinkers Pyotr Kropotkin and Mikhail Bakunin also envisioned their societal model as structured by individuals inherently different in their abilities.<sup>46,47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Schiff and Lewontin, op. cit.

<sup>46</sup> M. Bakunin, *Stateless Socialism: Anarchism* (New York: The Free Press, 1953), <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/various/soc-anar.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015); P. Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (New York: Putnam, 1906), [http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/kropotkin/conquest/toc.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/kropotkin/conquest/toc.html) (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>47</sup> By the anarcho-communist Pyotr Kropotkin, e.g. in his reference to art in *The Conquest of Bread* (Need for Luxury, V): ‘thousands of people *gifted with a certain amount of talent* cultivate every branch’ (italics added) [P. Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (New York: Putnam, 1906), [http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/kropotkin/conquest/toc.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/kropotkin/conquest/toc.html) (accessed 24 September 2015)], and by the collectivist anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, who defined his ‘basic principle of socialism’ in the following partial phrases: ‘To organize society in such a manner that every individual, man or woman, should find, *upon entering life*, approximately equal means for the development of *his or her diverse faculties* and their utilization in his or her work. And to organize such a society that ... will enable every individual to enjoy the social wealth ... *only in so far as he contributes directly*

## 2.2. Communist Equality as Inevitable Outcome of Historical Change

Another problematic issue is in the Marxist historical materialist approach that views the achievement of communist equality as the inevitable result of the forces of historical change. It considers that capitalism is destined to appear, grow and degenerate, giving rise to a communism initially based on the achievements of capitalism, the constraints and influences of which communism will overcome by undefined ways. The idea of a communist society destined to arise deterministically weakens every effort for its planning and immediate implementation. Marxism offers little help in dealing with difficult choices for the design of the communist society, and for the determination of an ideological framework for the equality it deserves.

## 2.3. Ever-Changing Character of the Proletariat

Ambiguous also is the political role and the character of the proletariat, that is the social class destined to enforce and implement communism. For Marxism, the proletariat has a historic mission of particular characteristics. It is the social class that produces the social wealth, it constitutes the majority of society, and it is the primary subject of capitalist exploitation and has an absolute need to abolish it. Leaving aside the thorny issue of defining the exact meaning of the term proletariat at the present historical stage of capitalism, its aforementioned apostolic characteristics do not necessarily converge. For example, in capitalist societies those individuals with the greatest need (e.g. the unemployed proletarians) and those actively and intensely overexploited (the proletarian employees) constitute time-varying social subgroup structures with financial interests not necessarily coinciding—the first would like to be in the position of the second, and not vice versa. Moreover, capitalism subverts unionism by promoting individual workers' responsibility for financial claims, so as to prevent the formation of maximally exploited majority social classes with strong incentive for revolution. In this perspective, capitalism may not deterministically find its 'gravediggers' in the Marxian proletariat. They may exist in the much broader, non-traditional proletariat, the constantly growing social class amalgam of the exploited.

## 2.4. Associating Equality with Personal Needs and Abundance of Goods

Another important problematic concern is raised by Marx's expectation for an abundance of goods as a precondition for achieving a genuine equality in advanced communism, for he was impressed by the great productive potential of capitalism. He

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*toward the creation of that wealth'* (Italics added) [M. Bakunin, *Stateless Socialism: Anarchism* New York: The Free Press, 1953), <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/various/soc-anar.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015)]. Unlike the anarchist communists of the 1880s, Bakunin did not believe in the maxim, 'from each according to his means, to each according to his needs', but in the radically different formula, 'From each according to his means (abilities), to each according to his deeds (work)'.

considered the capitalist mode and techniques of production as an integral part of the process of human development. Although in Marx's era traditional economies were recycling economies (e.g. Chinese villagers fertilised their fields with their droppings), he did not recognise—or perceived of minor importance—that the operational techniques and organisation of capitalist production constitute a wasteful economy. Thus, Marx predicted that a communist society could harness the potential of industrial progress for the eradication of scarcity of goods, ensuring that everyone would have ample resources for a prosperous life after the complete abolition of class society.

However, such a prediction is problematic in its validity and poses limitations for the application of Marxist equality both in early and advanced communism, especially under the ongoing destruction of nature, which Marx could foresee.<sup>48</sup> Today we are confronting an ecological crisis of incalculable dimensions (global warming, scarcity of drinking water, depletion of natural resources and energy, melting glaciers, deforestation, etc.). For the first time in human history we are faced with the depletion of oil, a key energy resource. Also relevant to these problems is the downgrading by capitalism of basic scientific research, as being unprofitable in the short run. The capitalist system deteriorates because it oppresses creative labour, blocks free research and prevents scientific and technological progress in sectors that do not pay off. This results in investment reductions for new technologies (which mainly spring up from basic research), the concomitant over-accumulation of capital, its uncontrollable transformation into a speculative commodity and stock market bubbles. However, it is the basic research of the past century that still produces, although at a slow pace, new technologies, especially in the automation area. An example is the developing technology of 3D printing (of products, houses, cars, etc.). However, although this technology will reduce production costs by forcing the worker out of the production process, it will also eliminate him as a consumer, thereby deepening the crisis of capitalism. It is doubtful whether Marxist communist equality can rely on the solution of all these problems to achieve abundance of goods for its implementation. A relevant additional problem is that the private ownership of the means of production, and their related natural resources, is now extended to all resources (from oil, gas, and minerals to water), intellectual property and even the human genetic material. All these factors would reduce the abundance of goods and utilisation of the maximum productive resources if they were privately owned and controlled within a transitional left political framework towards socialist societies.

Even so, abundance of goods does not ensure the attainment and maintenance of Marxist equality for two main reasons: firstly, it is doubtful whether capitalism will collapse while maintaining its productive forces intact and not first exhausting the natural resources of our planet, both presumed by Marxists to be used as a springboard for the development of communism. Moreover, the idea of inequality in personal abilities

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<sup>48</sup> E. Bitsakis, *La nature dans la pensée dialectique; Karl Marx, précurseur de l'écologie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).

poses an insurmountable obstacle to an equal pay implementation in advanced communism either under limited resources or in abundance of goods. The reason for this is that the mental ‘classes’ of people with presumed superior capabilities would continuously create for themselves, and demand to satisfy, more and more numerous expensive needs. This will generate, as a consequence, a greater accumulation and consumption of goods by the allegedly more intellectually able people, which will result in a lack of resources as a long-term outcome. Secondly, communist equality, as Marx supposes, will be gradually established and consolidated under the diminishing influence of the whole capitalist system of economic culture, mental motivations and values, which are supposed to vanish towards achieving advanced communism. However, such a course is doubtful and would hardly escape restoration of capitalism if the influence of the post-capitalist system already inhabits Marxism, as claimed by the Greek philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis (1922–1997) in the following excerpt:

This system was created and imposed by capitalism and Marxism eventually embraced it almost unchanged. Its central point is the idea that the purpose of social life is the unlimited growth of the productive forces, the ‘national product’ and the ‘national wealth.’ This unlimited growth has become the fetish of modern society, either as an end in itself or as the ultimate way to get to the liberation of man (this is the Marxist variant).<sup>49</sup>

Marx also raises ambiguities with the hypothetical projections he makes on the establishment of his supreme principle of equality under the abundance of goods (‘From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!’) in the advanced communism, while reiterating indirectly his perception about simple and complex labour (as ‘antithesis between mental and physical labour’):

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and therewith also the *antithesis between mental and physical labor*, has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of life but life’s prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and *all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!* (Italics added)<sup>50</sup>

Trotsky will further clarify the Marxist ‘formula’ of advanced communist equality in the following excerpt. Here, he attempts to justify its non egalitarian framework (the inherent inequality of individual skills), as is inferred by his reference to ‘physical and psychic powers’, by using altruistic assumptions (about ‘generous’ distribution of goods) and setting overoptimistic and psychopathological preconditions (abundance of goods, high cultural discipline by normal, not ‘sick and abnormal’ individuals—

<sup>49</sup> C. Castoriadis, *The Problem of Revolution Today* [in Greek] (Athens: Ypsilon, 2000) (my translation from Greek).

<sup>50</sup> Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, op. cit.



thus leaving room for possible misinterpretations, and subjective stigmatisation of dissidents). Moreover, Trotsky introduces in the Marxist egalitarian formula another type of equality that he does not define:

The two parts of this formula are inseparable. ‘*From each according to his abilities,*’ in the Communist, not the capitalist, sense, means: Work has now ceased to be an obligation, and has become an individual need; society has no further use for any compulsion. Only *sick and abnormal persons* will refuse to work. Working ‘*according to their ability*’—that is, in accord with their *physical and psychic powers*, without any violence to themselves—the members of the commune will, thanks to a high technique, sufficiently fill up the stores of society *so that society can generously endow each and all* ‘according to their needs,’ *without humiliating control*. This two-sided but indivisible formula of communism thus *assumes abundance, equality, an all-sided development of personality, and a high cultural discipline*. (Italics added)<sup>51</sup>

As Lenin notes in a relevant excerpt, this will happen by learning:

From the moment all members of society, or at least the vast majority, *have learned to administer the state themselves*, have taken this work into their own hands, [that] people will gradually become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims. They will become accustomed to observing them without force, without coercion, without subordination, without the special apparatus for coercion called the state [and that we should leave] the question of the time required for, or the concrete forms of, the withering away entirely open, because there is no material for answering these questions.<sup>52</sup>

However, Lenin does not tell us who is going to do the learning. Will it be the ‘classes’ of the gifted, the talented?

### 2.5. Concluding Remarks

All the aforementioned preconditions for achieving the communist equality carry germs of subjectivity, vagueness and timescale (the ‘time required’ is left ‘entirely open’, and easily translated to permanence). Also, they do not clarify how the required all-sided development of personality and the high cultural discipline would spring up in people under transitional socialist policies of unequal distribution of goods.

Considering that personal needs are directly associated with personal skills and satisfied by the available income and resources, the acquisition of which is related to the (presumed by Marx) inequality in personal skills, by extension it follows that inequality among individuals will exist also in the social value and content of their different needs. That is, inequality in personal capacities/skills necessarily translates into mental inequality in personal needs. Thus, the Marxist principle of advanced communist

<sup>51</sup> L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, Chap. 10, ‘The Soviet Union in the Mirror of the New Constitution, Part 1, ‘Work “according to ability” and Personal Property’, transl. M. Eastman (1936), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1936/revbet/ch10.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>52</sup> V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, Chap. 5, Sect. 4, op. cit.

equality, 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!', may also be viewed as a principle of mental inequality among genetically unequal people. This is because this principle bases the distribution of social goods and the satisfaction of personal needs according to the alleged inherent mental limitations existing among people. Moreover, Marx presumes that the abolition of private ownership of the means of production under a social regime of unequally waged individual abilities will eliminate economic exploitation and separation of intellectual from manual labour. However, economic exploitation could be eventually replaced by another form of intellectual, authoritarian and bureaucratic exploitation.

Marx's view that people are unequal in their alleged inherent abilities may have had significant political consequences on its implementation by his contemporary followers. The attempted political implementation of Marx's aforementioned view regarding the uneven time evaluation of simple and compound work,<sup>53</sup> may have contributed (a) to the emergence of party bureaucracy (together with centralisation and lack of effective internal party democracy), (b) to the distinction between intellectual and manual labour (i.e. people with 'higher' mental capabilities are better able to do more complex tasks) and their unequal wage evaluation in the former socialist countries, and (c) to the distorted constitutionalisation of the Marxian ultimate equality principle ('From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!') as formulated by Stalin:

From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.<sup>54</sup>

Trotsky denounced this principle of fake equality as being an 'inwardly contradictory, not to say nonsensical' distortion of the Marxian principle of communist equality, and evidence,

not only to a complete lowering of theoretical level in the lawgivers, but also to the lie with which, as a mirror of the ruling stratum, the new constitution is imbued.<sup>55</sup>

Subjectively defined and under subjective preconditions projected to be implemented, the Marxist principles of equitable distribution of social wealth ('according to individual abilities' and 'with an equal standard, [that of] labor') can be easily distorted. As such, they have contributed to the transformation of the former USSR, as Lenin states, to 'a workers' state with bureaucratic distortions'.<sup>56</sup> That is, in name a socialist system that eventually collapsed in the former Eastern European regimes from within, and still exists in China and elsewhere completely distorted and run under capitalist economy.

<sup>53</sup> Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, op. cit., Part II, 'Political Economy', Chap. 6, 'Simple and Compound Labour'.

<sup>54</sup> J.V. Stalin, *Constitution (Fundamental law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, Chap. I, 'The Organization of Society', Article 12, Works, Vol. 14 (London: Red Star Press, 1978; originally published 1936), <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1936/12/05.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>55</sup> Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> V.I. Lenin, 'The Party Crisis', in *Lenin's Collected Works*, Vol. 32, 1st English edn. (Moscow: Progress, 1965; originally published 1921), pp. 43–53, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/jan/19.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015).

The aforementioned Marxist misconceptions in reference to the alleged inequality in individual skills, the teleology of historical materialism, the role of the undefined proletariat, the shaky argument of the abundance of goods, the problematic evaluation of personal labour and the subjective and uncertain preconditions for the transformation in people's minds of their preconditioned capitalist mentality into a conscious communist principle, may have prevented the classics of Marxism from defining the moral standards of a communist equality devoid of any direct and indirect genetic constraints, in order to be unifying and motivating for immediate implementation. They believed that historical change would provide the right answers for the feasibility of a Marxian equality, and that the only thing that needed to be asked from people is to be ready for political action when the opportunity presents itself. Political strategic and tactical projects, moral ideals, basic rights and re-examination of the Marxian equality were avoided or condemned as utopian luxuries and elements of socialist revisionism.

Overcoming the limitations of Marxist equality could be achieved partly by its convergence with modern biology, in order to help redefine more objectively its ideological basis and content. Communist equality should be a socially unifying and objective moral principle. Such a principle can be an equality that accepts human nature as being defined by mental capabilities genetically undetermined upon birth/conception, with equal developmental potential among individuals, socially acquired and continuously shaped as unique expression of the individual. This principle of equality is the core element of what will be called thereafter in this article 'unconditional communist equality'.

### 3. For a New Ideological Concept of Communist Equality

Marx never attempted to give a final recipe for communist equality, or anything else. Indeed, he rejected any accusations that he wrote 'recipes for the cook-shops of the future'.<sup>57</sup> Thus, his conception of equality should not be treated as an indisputable ideological recipe. As previously indicated, the economic meritocratic logic of equality based on individual skills is traced in Marx's vision on early communism. The terms 'equality', 'inequality', 'equal' and 'unequal', especially in relation to the Marxian term 'endowment' (inheritance), suggest and presuppose their quantitative measurement by some 'standard', which, however, is a human invention and a social convention. Regarding equality in early communism, Marx sets, as its measuring standards, the intensity (non-measurable) and duration (measurable) of labour. For equality in the advanced communism (of abundance of goods), Marx's measuring standard is the satisfaction (non-measurable) of the individual's needs, which he presumes as being unequal among individuals (and also unmeasurable) because they are implied as associated with their genetically originating unequal abilities (thus, also measurable). Antonio Gramsci, one of the most important Marxist thinkers of the 20th century, is

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<sup>57</sup> Marx, *Capital*, op. cit., p. 13.

the first to make a clear diversion from the genetic non-egalitarian aspects of the Marxian conception of equality. Gramsci acknowledges the biological (thus genetic) basis of equality among the factors creating the perception of equality in people. In his *Prison Notebooks* he states that biological science

affirms the ‘natural’ (psycho-physical) equality of all the individual elements of the human ‘species’; everyone is born in the same way, etc.<sup>58</sup>

### 3.1. Scientific Validation of Unconditional Equality

A genuine communist equality can be fully differentiated from bourgeois equality only if identified in its content as unconditional and applicable to all people regardless of ostensible differences in abilities. Such equality is realistic because it is based on the archetypal sociobiological equality that exists among all people, it has scientific foundations and it is not an unnatural aim incompatible with human nature.<sup>59</sup> Since 1985, the renowned Harvard University professors Richard Levins (population geneticist) and Richard Lewontin (evolutionary biologist and geneticist) have pointed out that ‘we are born as tabulæ rasæ on which society writes its message’,<sup>60</sup> not discounting, of course, our biological nature. Their brave, at that time, claim was made in the middle of the ‘nature versus nurture’ and ‘IQ’ controversies, still maintained today by the sociobiological proponents of the notion that capitalism is the only political system that fits human nature (biological). These biologists were scientifically visionary to realise that the apparent differences in abilities among people are mainly the cause of the asymmetric socioeconomic influences of capitalism continuously exerted on the individual even from the time of conception. The scientific proof of the non-genetic basis of social human nature was provided by the first analyses of the Human Genome Project, published in 16 February 2001 by the journal *Science*.<sup>61</sup> In the words of Craig Venter, head of one of the two teams working on the project,

the wonderful diversity of the human species *is not hard-wired in our genetic code*.  
Our environments are crucial (Italics added)<sup>62</sup>

And

in developing each of our uniqueness<sup>63</sup>

And in an interview,

<sup>58</sup> A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and transl. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey N. Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971; originally published 1929–1935), p. 684.

<sup>59</sup> E. Bitsakis, ‘Is Human Nature Compatible with Socialism?’, *Critique*, 33 (2005), pp. 157–186.

<sup>60</sup> R. Levins and R.C. Lewontin, *The Dialectical Biologist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 23.

<sup>61</sup> J.C. Venter, et. al., ‘The Sequence of the Human Genome’, *Science*, 291 (2001), pp. 1304–1351.

<sup>62</sup> R. McKie, ‘Revealed: The Secret of Human Behaviour’, *The Guardian*, 11 February 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2001/feb/11/genetics.humanbehaviour> (accessed 20 April 2016).

<sup>63</sup> T. Bethell, ‘A Map to Nowhere’, *The American Spectator*, 34:3 (2001), pp. 51–56.

If you think we are hard-wired—that everything is deterministic—there should be a lot of genes because we have a lot of traits. This makes me as a scientist both laugh and cry. I laugh at the absurdity of it and *I want to cry because it is accepted as fact by so much of society*. But we are not hard-wired.<sup>64</sup>

In line with Venter, Svante Pääbo (of the Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig), made the same point in the same issue of *Science*:

There is an *insidious tendency* to look to our genes for most aspects of our ‘human-ness’, and to forget that *the genome is but an internal scaffold for our existence*. (Italics added)<sup>65</sup>

This ‘*insidious tendency* to look to our genes for most aspects of our “humanness” is systematically cultivated in the minds of people, and unfortunately has influenced the left ideology as well, through the pseudo-scientific sociobiological core element of bourgeois ideology. Another blow to the genetic determinism of the early 21st century comes from the new scientific field, pioneered by professor Edith Heard, that of *Epi-genetics*, the idea that persistent changes can occur to genes by environmental alteration of the actual sequence of DNA. This idea has immense scientific, and social, implications for stem-cell research (much of which focuses on reverting cells, which have already been genetically designated a function, back to their naive, embryonic state),<sup>66</sup> and entails philosophical implications from the fact that even the most permanent genetic biological states in organisms can be environmentally reverted. Despite these revolutionary biological discoveries, the alleged genetic origin of mental differences among individuals (an extensive analysis of sociobiology from a Marxian perspective was made by Frolov<sup>67</sup>) is used by capitalism to ‘scientifically’ justify individualism (i.e. the genetically determined politico-economic status of each individual), as Margaret Thatcher cynically portrayed:

There is no such thing as society. ... There are individual men and women and there are families.<sup>68</sup>

The concepts of ‘individuality’ and ‘ego’ actually represent a distortion of physical (and social) reality because they are subjectively perceived by our senses, and, most importantly, because they are biologically unfounded. Focusing on our chemical origin, the matter of which all individualities are made is a unified whole with respect to its individualised yet heavily interconnected subatomic origin. Going to the cell, the elemental unity of life, its universal in the human species metabolic structure is an extremely flexible and sensitive system, whose enzymatic processes change immediately in response to variations in environmental conditions. This metabolic system integrates and processes stimuli coming from the environment, which generate self-

<sup>64</sup> B. Dixon, ‘Meagre Numbers Raise Genome Questions’, *Current Biology*, 11:6 (2001), pp. R203–R204.

<sup>65</sup> S. Pääbo, ‘The Human Genome and our View of Ourselves’, *Science*, 291 (2001), pp. 1219–1220.

<sup>66</sup> E. Herald, *Epigenetics and Development*, 1st edn (London: Academic Press, 2013).

<sup>67</sup> Frolov, op. cit.

<sup>68</sup> M. Thatcher, Interview for *Woman’s Own*, interviewer Douglas Keay, Thatcher Archive, 1987, <http://www.margarethatthatcher.org/document/106689> (accessed 20 February 2013).

regulatory metabolic responses and the traffic of molecular information to DNA-associated metabolism. That is, cells self-organise and self-manage in response to the environment, while the individual components and facets of cell metabolism are non-hierarchical and are equivalent in functional importance. Life, thus, is inherently democratic in its molecular components and functions, as they all play interconnected and equivalent roles for survival against an ever-changing environment. Accordingly, the equivalence among the different elemental/molecular manifestations of matter extends from the biochemical/biological (cells/organisms) to human brain functioning, and subsequently, to the social level of organisation. Moreover, there will never exist a perfectly skillful individual who can be used as standard for measuring the skills of others, nor can there ever exist an individual with a 'perfect' genome (DNA) for comparing the genetic differences among individuals, let alone differences in intellect. The simple reason is that our genetic makeup, 'normal' and 'abnormal', is not 'ours' but an imprint, reflexion, bequest, a piece of the genetic history (past, present and future) and inseparable element of the common genetic amalgam of the human species.

Looking at individuality from a cultural and biological evolutionary perspective, recent studies in this field throw another decisive blow to the notion of inherent inequality among individuals in mental abilities. Contrary to popular belief, cultural evolutionary studies show that humans are not 'super species' among the social animals on the level of individuals. Indicatively, we are quite subjective in perceiving reality and the workings of our societies, we tend to overgeneralize the causes of events and phenomena, we overestimate our judgments about things, we are prone to deception, and if one of us is accidentally dropped in a jungle will more likely die than figure out how to stay alive. Thus, we are not that smart as individuals although as species we are equipped with the biggest brains in the animal kingdom. However, the secret of our success as species comes from a unique intelligence that is distributed across the community. This can be summarized by the term *collective brain* (proposed by Joseph Henrich, director of the Culture, Cognition, and Coevolution Lab at the University of British Columbia),<sup>69</sup> which is the sum total of cultural knowledge, skills, and technologies produced by the interaction among individuals within their societies. From birth we are trained in the vast pools of knowledge expressed as stories, practices, tools, and institutions, which has gradually piled up across the span of our ancestors, and has accumulated within the culture of our society. We are not rugged individuals but actually repositories of social learnings received by each of us from *cumulative culture*. This is what makes our species differ from all other social animals, and was shown by an excellent comparative study between human children and other intelligent social animals. In this study (published in the prestigious scientific journal *Science*),<sup>70</sup> 2.5-year-old children (before literacy and schooling), and adult

<sup>69</sup> J. Henrich, *The Secret of our Success: How Culture is Driving Human Evolution, Domesticating our Species, and Making Us Smarter* (Princeton University Press, 2015).

<sup>70</sup> E. Herrmann, J. Call, M. V. Hernández-Lloreda, B. Hare and M. Tomasello, 'Humans Have Evolved Specialized Skills of Social Cognition: The Cultural Intelligence Hypothesis', *Science*, 317 (2007), pp. 1360–1366.

chimpanzees and orangutans were compared in their performances on a battery of cognitive tests (discernment of quantities for containers of different shapes, spatial memory evaluated in moving objects, tool selection for tasks performance, and many more). It was found that children were no better and no worse, on average, than the great apes on all of the tasks having to do with general intelligence and problem solving. However, children (with little cultural knowledge built up so far) excelled in *social learning* (in imitation tests, where a role model performs a complex task while they watch and learn), while their primate peers failed completely. This impressive result is in accordance with previous studies showing that the individual brains of children are biased in copying the behaviors of prestigious and most successful individuals,<sup>71</sup> are blind followers and active enforcers of social norms immediately after they have learned them,<sup>72</sup> and copy results and unnecessary actions in the process of social learning.<sup>73</sup> In conclusion, evolution has shaped our brain's neurological anatomy with flexible and adaptive functions to help us excel by social learning (to assess and learn from those in our environment that draw our attention most, to acquire spoken and written language etc) in order to build on the successes of those before us, and to collectively accumulate solutions to problems that can be taught to the next generation.

The biological roots of equality can be traced back to our close relatives in the animal kingdom. Recent findings from the biological sciences prove that equality is a biological phenomenon manifested especially in primates. De Waal (primatologist, professor in Psychology at Emory University, Atlanta) in his research on monkeys, illustrates their ability to exhibit a remarkable tendency for equality, which he terms *inequity aversion*, and even altruistic behaviours, to do each other favors even if there is nothing in it for themselves.<sup>74</sup> Animals are not viewed anymore as gene

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<sup>71</sup> J. Henrich and F. J. Gil-White, 'The Evolution of Prestige: Freely Conferred Deference as a Mechanism for Enhancing the Benefits of Cultural Transmission', *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 22:3 (2001), pp. 165–196.

<sup>72</sup> M. F. Schmidt, H. Rakoczy and M. Tomasello, 'Young Children Enforce Social Norms Selectively Depending on the Violator's Group Affiliation', *Cognition*, 124:3 (2012), pp. 325–333.

<sup>73</sup> J. Call, M. Carpenter and M. Tomasello, 'Copying Results and Copying Actions in the Process of Social Learning: Chimpanzees (*Pan Troglodytes*) and Human Children (*Homo Sapiens*)', *Animal Cognition*, 8:3 (2004), pp.151–163.

<sup>74</sup> For example, most monkeys develop an overwhelming preference for prosocial choices, which preference is not due to fear of repercussions, because dominant monkeys (who have least to fear) are the most generous. Even though altruistic behavior evolved for the advantages it confers, this does not make it selfishly motivated. Future benefits rarely figure in the minds of animals. In another example, younger females sometimes trun ahead of an old sick female towards a water spigot, which is at quite a distance, take in some water, then return and give it to her by spitting a jet of water into her mouth. As far as inequity aversion, Frans underlined an unexpected twist to the inequity issue; while testing pairs of chimps, the one who gets the *better* deal occasionally refuses, as if they are satisfied only if both get the same. Chimpanzees console distressed parties, by hugging and kissing them. Mammals are sensitive to each other's emotions, react to others in need, and may derive pleasure from helping others in the same way that humans feel good doing good. Nature often equips life's essentials - sex, eating, nursing - with built-in gratification. One study found that pleasure centers in the human brain light up when we give to charity. This is of course no reason to call such behavior "selfish" since a selfish individual has no trouble walking away from another in need. We experience a "warm glow," and perhaps some other animals do as well, but since this glow reaches us *via* the other, and *only* via the other, the helping is genuinely



machines, programmed to act in particular ways, and are capable to develop intelligence and morality, and form complex societies to a status much closer to our own.<sup>75</sup> De Waal points out that economists and anthropologists have shown humanity to be far more cooperative, altruistic, and fair than predicted by self-interest models.<sup>76</sup> Another scientific breakthrough was the recent finding that social behaviour is not genetically predetermined in chimpanzees but is socially acquired and transmitted by mimetism among the members.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, the biologically imposed socialization of human species (arising from the biological need for its safe propagation), combined with certain uniquely interconnected elements in the topology of human brain (leading to speech and the ability for self-recognition and awareness) prevent man from de-evolving to his animal origin. In that sense, Engels was inaccurate in his conclusion:

It is, however, inherent in the descent of man from the animal world that he can never entirely rid himself of the beast, so that it can always be only a question of more or less, of a difference in the degree of bestiality or of humanity.<sup>78</sup>

Therefore, equality cannot be just a social concession to the individual but an objective entitlement and a right, as being a universal feature of human nature in its highest possible conscious manifestation. Modern biology, biochemistry and physics, therefore, converge to confirm the notion of biological equality advanced by the Greek sophist Antiphon 2,500 years later.

### 3.2. Intellectual Content of Unconditional Equality

Unconditional equality, therefore, can exist scientifically as independent of the biological makeup of the individual because it is based on laws of biology and physics that also shape human nature. Owing to this commonality, equality for the human species exists by necessity as socialist (communist), intellectual in principle and irrespective of the developmental phases of a communist society. Its mental non-measurable content relies on the human brain functioning, which is biochemically, developmentally and genetically of equal potential in all biologically normal individuals regardless of gender and ethnicity. Human brain mental development is dynamically shaped by environment (social, chemical, etc.) owing to its unlimited plasticity, which is based on a genetic framework with a potential functionality equal for all people. This plasticity configures all mental brain functions, mainly after birth, in response to the constant, and different for each person, influence of the social

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other-oriented [F. de Waal, 'Morals Without God?', *The New York Times* (The Opinion Pages), 17 October 2010, [http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/10/17/morals-without-god/?\\_r=0](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/10/17/morals-without-god/?_r=0) (accessed 20 April 2016)].

<sup>75</sup> F. de Waal, *The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism Among the Primates* (London: W. W. Norton, 2013); F. de Waal and P. Tyack, *Animal Social Complexity: Intelligence, Culture, and Individualized Societies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>76</sup> de Waal, 'Morals Without God?', op. cit.

<sup>77</sup> C. Hobaiter, T. Poisot, K. Zuberbühler, W. Hoppitt and T. Gruber, 'Social Network Analysis Shows Direct Evidence for Social Transmission of Tool Use in Wild Chimpanzees', *PLoS Biology* 12:9 (2014), e1001960.

<sup>78</sup> Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, op. cit., Part I, 'Philosophy', Chap. 10, 'Morality and Law: Equality'.

microenvironment together with various biochemical factors (e.g. food nutrients, toxic chemicals, as well as the ‘epigenetic’ changes they cause in the human genome, etc.).<sup>79</sup> Recent biological scientific advances have proven that the experience of the individual is the driving force of brain plasticity.<sup>80</sup>

However, individuals possess finite mental capacities and lifespans that do not allow them to capture the whole of the innumerable intricate functioning components and facets of their society; each individual continuously develops an indeterminate set of capacities quite different from other people. Individuals can perceive only some of the aspects of their social environment, primarily those related to their social macro/micro-environments that predominantly affect the development of their skills. Moreover, the maximum expansion of these capabilities among individuals depends on time- and place-uneven and constantly changing social and personal influences. These are exerted by experience on each individual via dissipation by/to others of social information and by acquisition of educational knowledge, coupled with the

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<sup>79</sup> Georgiou, ‘Analogies’, op. cit.; Georgiou, ‘Evolutionary Psychology’, op. cit.; Georgiou, ‘Biological Determinism’, op. cit.; Georgiou, ‘Biological Reductionism’, op. cit.; Howe et al., op. cit.; Levins and Lewontin, op. cit.; Lewontin, *Biology as Ideology*, op. cit.; Lewontin et al., *Not in Our Genes*, op. cit.; and Lewontin, *Education and Class*, op. cit.

<sup>80</sup> In favour of experience-dependent effects is that the magnitude of the cortical change is typically correlated with the age of commencement [C. Pantev, R. Oostenveld, A. Engelien, B. Ross, L.E. Roberts and M. Hoke, ‘Increased Auditory Cortical Representation in Musicians’, *Nature*, 392 (1998), pp. 811–814; P.C.M. Wong, E. Skoe, N.M. Russo, T. Dees and N. Kraus, ‘Musical Experience Shapes Human Brainstem Encoding of Linguistic Pitch Patterns’, *Nature Neuroscience*, 10 (2007), pp. 420–422], suggesting a causal relationship. Stronger evidence for such causality comes from longitudinal studies, which have demonstrated that after training, both in children [T. Fujioka, B. Ross, R. Kakigi, C. Pantev and L.J. Trainor, ‘One Year of Musical Training Affects Development of Auditory Cortical-evoked Fields in Young Children’, *Brain*, 129 (2006), pp. 2593–2608] and in adults [C. Lappe, S.C. Herholz, L.J. Trainor and C. Pantev, ‘Cortical Plasticity Induced by Short-term Unimodal and Multimodal Musical Training’, *Journal of Neuroscience*, 28 (2008), pp. 9632–9639], there are clear changes (cortical plasticity) in auditory cortical evoked responses and in the brainstem [J. Song, E. Skoe, K. Banai and N. Kraus, ‘Training to Improve Hearing Speech in Noise: Biological Mechanisms’, *Cerebral Cortex*, 22 (2012), pp. 1180–1190]. Moreover, studies have shown that the degree of anatomical change is related to amount of training [S.L. Bengtsson, Z. Nagy, S. Skare, L. Forsman, H. Forsberg and F. Ullén, ‘Extensive Piano Practice has Regionally Specific Effects on White Matter Development’, *Nature Neuroscience*, 8 (2005), pp. 1148–1150; N.E.V. Foster and R.J. Zatorre, ‘Cortical Structure Predicts Success in Performing Musical Transformation Judgments’, *NeuroImage*, 53 (2010), pp. 26–36] and/or to age of commencement [C.J. Steele, J.A. Bailey, R.J. Zatorre and V.B. Penhune, ‘Early Musical Training and White-matter Plasticity in the Corpus Callosum: Evidence for a Sensitive Period’, *Journal of Neuroscience*, 33 (2013), pp. 1282–1290], implying that experience is the cause of the change. Convincing evidence in favour of experience-dependent brain plasticity comes from longitudinal studies, which have shown changes in cortical morphology in both auditory and motor regions among children who received musical training [K.L. Hyde, J. Lerch, A. Norton, M. Forgeard, E. Winner, A.C. Evans and G. Schlaug, ‘Musical Training Shapes Structural Brain Development’, *Journal of Neuroscience*, 29 (2009), pp. 3019–3025]; these anatomical effects were directly linked to improved performance because the degree of change is correlated with behavioural measures. Similarly, in the speech domain there have been demonstrations that brain morphology is related to linguistic experience. Thus, differences in structural measures have been noted in auditory cortices in bilingual individuals [V.C.P. Ressel, N. Ventura-Campos, B. Diaz, A. Roessler, C. Avila and N. Sebastian-Galles, ‘An Effect of Bilingualism on the Auditory Cortex’, *Journal of Neuroscience*, 32 (2012), pp. 16597–16601] and also in simultaneous interpreters [N. Golestani, C.J. Price and S.K. Scott, ‘Born with an Ear for Dialects? Structural Plasticity in the Expert Phonetician Brain’, *Journal of Neuroscience*, 31 (2011), pp. 4213–4220].

content of existing economic, educational and cultural values. Furthermore, the phenotypically different abilities among individuals are a result of social micro-environments that may form, develop, mutate, be replaced by others without the intervention of the individual. All these factors affect in different and unpredictable ways the maximisation of the combinatorial mental capacities of the human brain, which are potentially equal in all people from birth. This notion is reflected by (a) the kind, shape and number of developed individual abilities, and (b) thus, by the ability of individuals to deal with the limitations of human sensory organs in recognising, approximating or distorting their social reality. Individual needs are also subjected to similar environmental influences and generational causes, because they adjust, depend on and are served mainly by the individual abilities.

Since equality's intellectual content is manifested in an unlimited variety of capability forms, it is deeply subjective to evaluate it with the Marxian standard of equal labour or any other standard. Yet even if it were assumed that personal skills could be objectively assessed on the basis of their apparent characteristics, their quantification would not be feasible because their intellectual content can be hidden and cannot always be openly expressed by the biological organs of the individual. The indicative example of the (uncovered by the help of technology) hidden stunning cognitive capabilities of the famous astrophysicist Stephen Hawking demonstrates the impossibility of an objective quantitative evaluation of personal skills and capabilities.

From the above arguments it follows that a person's various abilities cannot be objectively (that is quantitatively) evaluated in comparison to other individuals in terms of their social usefulness. Therefore, the difference among individuals' complex sets of postnatally acquired multifarious skills should be considered, by necessity, equivalent for all individuals viewed in the context of a dynamically developing communist society. Moreover, there is no objective means for a comparative isometric evaluation between simple and compound labour in terms of their corresponding mental capabilities for the following main reasons. The mentally intensive and time-consuming components of compound labour have been taken over by computers (i.e. architectural, engineering drawings, electronic literature support of research and literary activities, etc.), and modern research and production processes require collaborative work. Consequently, the equal labour standard of early communism Marxian equality is invalid for the evaluation of simple and compound work in their corresponding labour quantity, intensity, quality and time. Additionally, personal needs (in early and advanced communism) should be only harmonised with the equivalent essence in all individuals of human nature, rather than with personal ephemeral goals related mainly to personal abilities. In light of all these, communist equality can exist only without preconditions and regardless of (early or advanced) communist society stages.

### 3.3. *Work Compensation in Unconditional Equality*

The ideological cornerstone of the unconditional communist equality is the non-negotiable principle of the biologically inherent and equivalent among people potential

intellectual equality. The consequence of this is the essential (and not constitutional) elimination of divisions between intellectual and manual labour, male and female abilities, ordinary jobs and housekeeping or other kinds of social contributions. In such context of equality, individuals will develop and utilise for the benefit of society a variety of non-comparable capacities for socially equivalent activities such as the common jobs, household care, raising children, etc., or for various broader social occupations and contributions. Moreover, under such conditions the maximisation of individual mental abilities will spring up as the only incentive for socially oriented competition among intellectually equivalent people, because the benefit of the individual will become meaningful only when it is generally recognised as promoting the much wider public social interest. Under such a social environment no-one will develop any incentives to prove that he/she is intellectually superior to others—and hence more valuable than others in terms of amount of wages and income. Thereby, the competitive divisive attitudes that develop among individuals who believe in the unique genetic value of their capacities shall be meaningless, as well as the corresponding competitive incentives for unequal salary/income.

Considering the distributive value of material and spiritual social goods, unconditional communist equality should be implemented by their equitable distribution among all socially producing individuals, with the objective of an all-round enrichment of their human nature. Assuming that work/labour in a communist society must have only social content and promote/develop collaborative and collective individuality, any kind of socially constructive work should be considered a socially equivalent and equitable productive task among individuals. In communism, socially productive work can be defined as any voluntary personal activity that benefits society directly or indirectly; this does not include personal activities to satisfy exclusively individual needs (hobbies, etc.). For a work of greater intensity than others, the number of participating workers can increase proportionally. Regardless of labour intensity and personal capacities needed to execute given work (simple or compound) by an individual, labour can be evaluated by its time duration as equal standard (regardless of social stages towards advanced communism) and with the same gross total labour duration (e.g. monthly) so that all people can have similar free time. This standard cannot be considered a measuring tool of communist equality, which has no quantity as a moral, yet objective principle. Social work in advanced communism need not be assessed by equal wages/income (this may happen until the final abolition of money) but by ways and means determined by social agreement (e.g. with a goods distribution/exchange certificate of equal value for all members of society).

Unlike Marx, who considers that elements of bourgeois law and therefore wage differentials will be maintained even during the transitional period towards advanced communism, Castoriadis claims that the immediate equalisation of wages and income of any kind is an absolute requirement for the establishment and normal functioning of a communist society because the hierarchy (i.e. inequality) of power occurs, consolidates, feeds on itself and is reflected as 'wage and status hierarchies' as well.<sup>81</sup> In Castoriadis's direct democracy model, all decision-making processes are run by those

concerned, and the ‘constant eligibility and revocability of representatives’ is an absolute prerequisite for the proper functioning of a communist society. Other equally important preconditions are the ‘systematic effort to gather and disseminate information [connaissance] about social reality’ to all citizens in order to ensure effective collective consultation, and the ‘absolute wage equality’.<sup>82</sup> The equalisation of all wages and incomes is one of the first steps that people’s councils should take in case of social transformation,

So that this measure will not be a distant result, but initial means to abolish, completely uproot the ‘economic’ or ‘economistic’ mentality that makes us want more than others, or to want to get this or that job as to be able to gain more than the others ... The economic competition in society exists because, and has as its premise that, the social institutions actually allow the economic inequality, and the established value system assesses positively those who ‘possess’ or ‘win’ and negatively the others ... What is needed is to make the idea ‘I earn more than you,’ as ridiculous as the idea ‘I’m better than you because my grandmother slept with the King who made my grandfather Baron’.<sup>83</sup>

However, Castoriadis’s wage/income equality (‘until it proves feasible to abolish money’<sup>84</sup>) will be inapplicable without widening its egalitarian ideological context, as well as identifying appropriate value incentives to ensure its consolidation. The ‘economistic’ mentality of people may not be eradicated just by the abolition of classes and of social institutions and values that perpetuate economic inequality. This will also require the eradication of the perception of the existence of inherent mental inequalities among individuals, which is one of the main causes of all kinds of economic competition incentives and forms of inequality that divide people in capitalism and past social systems. If this perception is not eliminated from the Castoriadian wage/income equality equation, it will inevitably create feelings of injustice in those individuals who believe that their innate abilities will always be superior to others (as having a teleological genetic basis) and should be evaluated accordingly.

Equitable distribution of material and spiritual resources is also a prerequisite for political equality in its most absolute form, as Gramsci has pointed out as well:

the idea that complete and perfect political equality cannot exist without economic equality [ ... ] remains correct.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> C. Castoriadis, *On the Content of Socialism* (‘Sur le contenu du socialisme, II,’ S. ou B., no. 22, July 1957), transl. David A. Curtis (1957), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/castoriadis/1957/socialism-2.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> C. Castoriadis, *The Problem of Revolution Today* [in Greek] (Athens: Ypsilon, 2000) (my translation from Greek).

<sup>84</sup> C. Castoriadis, *Postscript on Insignificance: Dialogues with Cornelius Castoriadis*, *Socialism or Barbarism*, 2. The Socialist Program, no. 27 (London: Bloomsbury (Continuum), 2011), <http://www.notbored.org/PSRTI.pdf> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>85</sup> Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, op. cit., p. 525.

That is, genuine equality can exist only when people have an equal active and effective (not just constitutionally guaranteed) opportunity to participate in the political development/management of their society. People should not be able only to vote but also be aware of what is to be decided. This assumes that people possess an effective ability to judge, which implies both access to all-sided education and the availability of ample time for access to information and for discussions, as well as full participation in economic, political and cultural matters of their society. Such equality can flourish in self-managed societies where their members are convinced that they are equal participants. Full intellectual development (sociopolitical) in biologically normal people can exist and be sustained only under an unconditional communist equality, where individuality is recognised and equally valued intellectually among socialised people through continuous collaborative, creative communication and amalgamation of personal and collective experiences.

#### 3.4. Unconditional Equality and Spiritual Prosperity and Personal Choices

Unconditional communist equality should also be defined by its spiritual content. It should not aim only at the preservation of the biological nature of man but also at serving those personal needs that advance the completeness of the individual's spiritual nature and welfare in general. All individuals should have equal access to all intellectual and material resources that promote their prosperity. Equal access to the means of prosperity does not ensure that people will be equal in its content as well, which should be basically spiritual. This will require that intellectual culture advanced by the communist society will be of such a level that, in combination with the abolition of money, it will prevent the conversion of material resources into consumer goods and thus into false needs for obtaining material prosperity. Naturally, the material resources of socialist society will set the limits of the means (and their availability) for human flourishing, by ensuring that when needed they can be reduced to compensate for emergency means (e.g. health care). Therefore, abundance of goods is not a prerequisite for a communist society, early or advanced, as long as it is structured also on the basis of a spiritual communist equality without preconditions.

Unconditional communist equality should not be confused with vulgar egalitarian attitudes against personal diversity and in favour of serving the needs of each individual by identical ways and means. Unconditional equality should recognise, encourage and stimulate the apparent differences in personal skills, as well as the right to those differences. However, difference is not identified with inequality nor is equality with uniformity. Moreover, differences in people complement each other and therefore we, as social and political beings, are not allowed to be distinguished as 'superior' and 'inferior'. Nevertheless, equality in differences proposed by the American libertarian socialist philosopher Murray Bookchin as 'equality of unequals that does not deny the right to life of those whose powers are failing or less developed than others',<sup>86</sup> may

<sup>86</sup> M. Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1996), p. 80.

not protect the weak (e.g. from genetic stigmatisation and diminished self-esteem) while it may degenerate into a philanthropic equality since it does not deal with the origin (genetic or not) of inequalities.

On the other hand, serving personal needs by identical ways and means is unrealistic because the selection of material and spiritual goods and means by the individuals to achieve their prosperity has also subjective dimensions. That is, the perception of personal prosperity also depends on how the individuals experience the social value of goods, material and spiritual. A person's positive perception of his prosperity coming from experience of particular goods can be negative for another person for the same goods. To compensate, a socialist society should encourage individuals to shape preferences, pursuits and activities governed by values compatible with self-managerial social activities and goals. A variety of sources for human welfare should also be promoted to enable the individual to choose by evaluating different lifestyles. Moreover, the communist society is also a society of versatile intellectual flourishing. Marx was pointing that each person should have the opportunity 'to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner'.<sup>87</sup>

Communist equality should guarantee to people not only access to prosperity for a full life but also to the possibilities and potentials for such life. It would constitute an insignificant ideal for someone to simply have the opportunity 'to hunt in the morning and be a theatre critic after dinner', if he feels that, for example, he/she has no equal part in decisions pertaining to the operational and developmental processes of his society. Moreover, a communist society of unconditional equality should not impose certain standards of prosperity. For example, one would feel uneasy if his colleagues forced him/her to participate in pre-decided activities without his involvement in these activities no matter how well-intentioned they were. Another element of unconditional communist equality is to provide people with options of opportunities to engage in activities of their conscious choice. However, while options contribute to prosperity, only those that actually promote it are vital to peoples' unconditional equality.

A communist society of unconditional equality should also overcome any problems arising from socially wrong personal choices. If society assumes the entire expense of wrong personal decisions, in the long run this may contribute to the return to class society. The members of a self-managed communist society should foresee, converse and make convergent decisions to address and prevent wrong personal choices. Otherwise, individuals will not learn by social experience to make the right choices, they will be reluctant to opt for goods of essential, indirect and long-term social benefits, and their decisions will not be characterised by comradeship and a sense of responsibility towards their fellow citizens.

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<sup>87</sup> K. Marx, 'The German Ideology, Vol. I, Critique of Modern German Philosophy According to Its Representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer and Stirner'. Part I: Feuerbach: Opposition of the materialist and idealist outlook. A. Idealism and Materialism: Private Property and Communism', 1845, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol. 5 (autumn 1845 to mid-1846), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015).



#### 4. Compatibility of Marxism and Unconditional Communist Equality

Equality in a just society is imposed as a moral principle. Nonetheless, Marx tends to avoid explicit theorising on moral principles, considering similar assertions as ideological dust thrust in the eyes of the workers by the defenders of capitalism. However, Marxism is not morally obsolete since Marx's critique of inequality concerns both the alienation and estrangement of individuals. Marx refers not only to the unfairness of those facing hardship while others do not, but also to the distortion in moral values such sufferings impose, making an indirect appeal to the idea of a good life that people are entitled to live. Economic inequality is unacceptable because it degrades human beings in the sense that it deprives them of dignity, self-determination, the ability to develop their capacities, and the capability of choosing among different paths to human flourishing and prosperity. Marx's concept of exploitation is focused on the injustice for some to have more wealth than others, which is exerted with the appropriation of the labour product of workers by the owners of the means of production. That is, the moral argument of exploitation in Marx is associated with the effect of alienation and inequality on people's rightful potential to live well.<sup>88</sup> Communism for Marx, according to the Austrian Marxist social philosopher Max Adler, will not happen because it is morally justified but because it has causative origin, which at the same time constitutes its moral vindication.<sup>89</sup>

Marx's work does not contain a normative moral theory of justice and equality, although he occasionally refers to them in his economic criticism of capitalism. The French Marxist philosopher Yvon Quiniou argues that a 'normative morale' can nevertheless be early detected in Marx's thought, problematic though, as in some ways, it might be:

Sa présence est évidente: Marx l'a clairement assumée à titre de motivation initiale de son itinéraire théorique-pratique. [Its presence is obvious: Marx clearly assumed it as initial motivation of his theoretical and practical route.]<sup>90</sup>

However, Engels's reflections (in *Anti-Dühring*) on moral principles and associated values<sup>91</sup> do not exclude the formulation of a fundamental moral principle, which will characterise the communist society.<sup>92</sup> Encapsulating the reflections of Engels, George Maniatis states that,

<sup>88</sup> K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. Critique of Hegel's Philosophy in General*, transl. Martin Mulligan (Moscow: Progress, 1959; originally published 1844), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/hegel.htm> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>89</sup> G. Maniatis, *Politics and Ethics. The Dialectics of Emancipation* [in Greek]. *Marxistiki Skepsi* (in section Bibliography, subsection Philosophy) (2011), <http://www.marxistiskepsi.gr/index.php/el/philosophy/102-2011-10-14-09-48-48> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>90</sup> Y. Quiniou, *Etudes matérialistes sur la morale* (Paris: Kimé, 2002), p. 66 (my translation).

<sup>91</sup> Those values expressing the economic core of social relations, having non-moralistic character (i.e. using as philosophical support the 'eternal human nature'), and forming part of the historical-dialectical social process.

<sup>92</sup> Maniatis, *op. cit.*

the 'potential for a panhuman morality' is historically possible as 'a non-preformed, moral imperative [...] but the final product of a historical process'.<sup>93</sup>

In such a perspective, unconditional communist equality is compatible with Marxism, and could become historically a panhuman moral principle, because its ideological basis—the potentially equivalent social intellect in all people—is a scientifically objective moral imperative.

## 5. Unconditional Equality and the Ideological Fragmentation of the Left Movement

Unconditional communist equality can be the moral foundation of a modern left ideology within an accordingly configured Marxist framework. Communism not relying on a tangible panhuman moral principle that is based on the potential biological and intellectual equality among people may be an elusive vision for 'just' societies (analogous to Heaven), where the projected inherently unequal individual abilities ('divine charismas') are softened by the prospect of an abstract equality (analogous to heavenly justice).

An unconditional communist equality could help to partly explain (by its lack) the ideological differences among reformist, orthodox and other versions of contemporary Left, and possibly contribute in the elimination of these differences. Political fragmentation of the Left in various parties/ideological currents/movements may be related, among other factors (social and gnosis-theoretical), to the content of Marxian equality and its distortions, as reflected by the various past/current left policies and strategies towards socialism/communism. The different degrees by which the various fractions of the Left accept the Marxian position on inequality in skills among individuals, appear to be correlated with the different degrees (dosages) of socioeconomic inequality and democracy they propose that should be applied towards transitional socialist societies.

Norberto Bobbio, a liberal socialist (professor of legal and political philosophy), reaches a similar conclusion about the distinction of Left and Right, but for the exact opposite reason; that 'equality for everyone in everything' is so impractical as to be a meaningless utopia.<sup>94</sup> He claims that the difference between Left and Right in social organisation concerning the elements of equality and inequality is a question of degree within a particular cultural and historical context. Contrary to this view, the present analysis claims that the lack of a scientific definition of equality as potential reality and not utopia is the main cause of the ideological differentiation of the Left and its corresponding fragmentation. Deeper in this Right–Left distinction lies the 'nature–nurture' distinction, where the balance tilts towards 'nature' for the Right (exclusively 'nature' for the far Right, to 'most of it' for the Right), and the balance

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> N. Bobbio, *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction*, transl. by Allan Cameron (Cambridge: The University of Chicago Press/Polity Press, 1996), p. 63.

of the spectrum goes to the Left (from equalisation of 'nature' and 'nurture' towards 'nurture' contributing by various degrees). The ideological problems of the Left arise from the fact that it does not realise that its fragmentation reflects also the degree of 'nature' contribution it accepts in its perceived notion of equality.

Customisation of Marxism by the Left to justify different political recipes of economic rewarding of personal skills has contributed to the degeneration of the communist ideal into bureaucratic regimes of 'real existing socialism', orthodox communism, eurocommunism and social democratic revisionism. It is also responsible for the degradation of revolutionary Marxism into revisionist recipes of transitional political strategies towards the gradual weakening of capitalism. Such a Left cannot create sustainable socialist state structures by transitional models of unequal economic distribution. Historical experience has shown that such social structures eventually lead to capitalist restoration. Defamation of the communist ideal can also come from the promotion by the Left of a pseudomeritocratic equality under transitional political strategies towards socialism. The reason for this is that such socioeconomic transitions are easily diverted to revisionist transitions, where everything fits in, with most prominent the 'capitalism with a human face'.

Linking, in any way, direct or indirect, communist equality with personal abilities poses an insurmountable obstacle to the Left for the political emancipation of man. On the other hand, unconditional communist equality can have the potential to function as a pole for the creation of a modern Left, more ideologically attractive when liberated from the theoretical and practical problems and limitations of Marxist equality. A renewed Left could be organised in national parties functioning under a mutually agreed ideological statute with unconditional equality in its core, so as to operate as an internationalist movement as well. Such a Left could inspire and unify all social strata irrespective of how subjectively and differently they perceive their exploitation. Given the increasing misery and the gradual subsiding of people's individualism brought upon them by capitalism, a Left preparing for its overthrow could effectively familiarise people, accustomed to the elitist and hierarchical capitalist ideology, with the new ideal of communist unconditional equality. Moreover, the ongoing destruction of the environment, the depletion of natural resources and the increasing realisation of the concomitant high risk of human extinction as consequence of capitalism, will also accelerate the realisation of the historical necessity of communism.

Upon assuming political power, the Left can prioritise unconditional communist equality as an immediately achievable political goal and not as an unattractive distant vision. This will irrevocably cut the Gordian knot of all restorationist influences of capitalism and will free the construction of an irreversible communist society. The new leaven of future communism will not be the uneducated worker of the past but people who, with the help of technology, can readily acquire and constantly renew their theoretical and practical knowledge for sustainable political and economic self-organisation and management.

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